

**CITY OF ROCKVILLE PLANNING DIVISION
STAFF REPORT**

September 16, 2009

SUBJECT: Map Amendment Application
MAP2010-00107

Applicant: Mayor and Council of Rockville

Owner: Iglesia de Dios
(Pastor Rodriguez)

Date Filed: 8/17/2009

Location: 224 Elizabeth Avenue



REQUEST: To change the zoning of 9,500 square feet of land known as 224 Elizabeth Avenue from R-60 to R-60 HD (Historic District).

Planning Commission Review Date: September 23, 2009

Mayor and Council Public Hearing: October 12, 2009

RELEVANT ISSUES: This Map Amendment was initiated by the owner's application for a demolition permit for this structure on March 11, 2009. The applicant is a church, which intends to renovate and will need additional parking. Per Section 25.04.04.b.1. (b) of the Zoning Ordinance, demolition permits for all structures in the City are sent for Historic District Commission (HDC) review immediately upon filing.

Community comments at the April 16, 2009 meeting led the HDC to ask for further research on the historic significance of the property. At the May 21, 2009 meeting, the HDC voted to recommend historic district zoning on the basis of City of Rockville Criterion I-C, because it exemplifies the cultural history of Lincoln Park. The HDC noted that the changes to the property over time are significant, and the mid-20th century alterations to the building are part of its significance.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends that the Planning Commission find that historic district re-zoning is in conformance with the *Approved and Adopted Lincoln Park Neighborhood Plan (2007)* and will not present an adverse impact to the planning area or neighborhood.



Front (South) Elevation



Rear (North) Elevation

ANALYSIS

Background

Chapter 8 of the *Comprehensive Master Plan* (2002) discusses the historic preservation program, issues and goals for the City. Lincoln Park is mentioned as a whole, as an area that may be eligible for future designation as a historic district (p. 8-12). The *Approved and Adopted Lincoln Park Neighborhood Plan* (NP) was adopted in February 2007, and the *Lincoln Park Conservation District Plan* (CDP) was adopted with the new Zoning Ordinance in December 2008. A central theme of both of these documents is the recognition of Lincoln Park as a coherent residential community. The *Neighborhood Plan* states a goal of “maintaining Lincoln Park as a stable and secure residential neighborhood” (NP, p 11); while the *Conservation District Plan* states its purpose as the “preservation of the existing character of the community” (CDP, p 1).

The HDC makes their evaluation strictly on the Criteria for Evaluation (shown below), which have been adopted by the Mayor and Council. These are based on the National Register Criteria and are the foundation for historic evaluations in Rockville. After an evaluation of the Criteria, the HDC adds an evaluation of the structural integrity of the property, testing if the property still convey its sense of time and place.

I. Historical and cultural significance criteria for evaluation:

- A. Is the site of a significant historic event.
- B. Is identified with a person or a group of persons who influenced society.
- C. Exemplifies the cultural, economic, social, political or historic heritage of the County and its communities. (Refer to Rockville Context in Management Plan)
- D. Has character, interest, or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, County, State, or Nation.

II. Architectural and design significance criteria for evaluation:

- A. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction.
- B. Represents the work of a master.
- C. Possesses high artistic values.
- D. Represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction. *This criterion applies to multi-site historic districts only.*
- E. Represents an established or familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or county due to its singular physical characteristic or landscape.

Planning Area and Property Description

The house at 224 Elizabeth Avenue is located in Planning Area Six, lying northeast of Rockville's Town Center, and bounded by North Horners Lane (between Lincoln Avenue and Westmore road) on the east, the East Rockville Planning Area on the south, the Metro/CSX tracks on the west, and the Westmore industrial area and City limits on the north. The house sits on a lot measuring 50 feet x 190 feet. It is the last house at the northeast edge of Elizabeth Avenue that fronts Elizabeth Avenue. Adjacent and to the east of the subject property, is the Iglesia de Dios (Church of God) at 600 Westmore Avenue. Directly across the street from this church, on the southeast corner of Elizabeth and Westmore, is the Clinton AME Zion Church. This church was originally located in the Rockville Town Center area of N. Washington Street and Beall Avenue, and moved to Lincoln Park in 1956. Except for the two churches at Westmore, all the properties along Elizabeth Avenue are single-family residences. The street is notable for its narrow width and mature trees, with low-scale homes on either side of the street.



Iglesia de Dios



Clinton AME Zion Church



Elizabeth Avenue looking West

Overall goals for the *Neighborhood Plan* are first presented on page 11, and further developed throughout the *Plan*. Recommendations for historic significance includes Chapter 2: Land Use, Objective 9: Preserve the character of the community as a historical resource.” (NP, p. 12). The emphasis of the *Plan* is on the residential character of Lincoln Park, and the goal of providing a diverse range of housing opportunities, as well as to prevent “nonresidential encroachment” (NP, p. 12). To accomplish this goal, the development standards for Lincoln Park include the prohibition of the assemblage of lots, and the resubdivision of existing original lots. (CDP, p. 6).

The *Neighborhood Plan* also discusses the presence of churches within the community, including the Iglesia de Dios. It notes that the church has not been disruptive to the residential community, but that “expansion, change of use or operation of the facility must be carefully considered so as not to impact the residential quality of life in Lincoln Park” (NP, p.23). This is emphasized on the following page with a statement that “...the impacts of any expansions ... must be closely evaluated by the neighborhood and the City of Rockville with respect to quality of life concerns” (NP, p.24).

Within this context, the proposed historic designation of this property will comply with the *Neighborhood Plan*, by maintaining the residential character of this part of Elizabeth Avenue. In addition, historic designation would likely provide for the retention of this moderately-priced home, thereby assuring another aspect of the *Neighborhood Plan* to provide a range of housing opportunities for residents (NP, p.11).

“Chapter 3: Historic Preservation” of the *Neighborhood Plan* sets objectives that will help develop an understanding of the history of the Lincoln Park community, including the need to identify historic resources. City staff undertook research and survey work as part of the *Neighborhood Plan*, but these efforts would have to be seen starting point only. Buildings were surveyed for their architectural style and integrity, to provide a database for the Conservation District. The *Neighborhood Plan* notes that in-depth historical and architectural research still needs to be done (NP, p.40). This in-depth research, to date, is occurring on a case-by-case basis, as demolition permits are filed in the area.

Process

Demolition Permit received	March 11, 2009
HDC Review:	April 16 and May 21, 2009
Mayor & Council Authorization to File:	July 27, 2009
Planning Commission Recommendation:	September 23, 2009
Mayor & Council Public Hearing:	October 12, 2009
D&I, Intro & Adoption:	To be scheduled

The Planning Commission is asked to review the proposed zoning change for conformance with the adopted *Neighborhood Plan* and for its impacts to the planning area. Staff will forward the Planning Commission's recommendation to the Mayor and Council for inclusion in the public record. The Mayor and Council's Public Hearing is currently scheduled for October 12, 2009. Discussion and Instructions will be provided to staff by the Mayor and Council at a future date.

Impact

The underlying zone and permitted uses of the property will not change, and it will remain a single family detached residence. The owners may be eligible for tax credits for maintenance and improvements to a historic property after designation. Any exterior changes in material or design must be approved by the Historic District Commission prior to issuance of a building permit or commencement of work.

Staff Comments

This rezoning was opposed by the owner, but supported by members of the community. Historic district zoning is in compliance with the 2002 *Comprehensive Master Plan* and with the 2008 *Neighborhood Plan*. As the underlying zoning for single-family residential will not change, there will be no negative effect on the neighborhood or streetscape. Designation may provide tax credit assistance to the owners for maintenance and upkeep of the property. This includes the 10% Montgomery County property tax credit, and the 20% State of Maryland income tax credit for the rehabilitation of historic properties. Any significant changes in material or design to the exterior of the building, or the building of any new structures will be reviewed by the Historic District Commission for compatibility with the existing structure, and retention of the character of the structure and site.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The Planning Commission is asked to determine if this proposed zoning change is generally consistent with the City's master plans. Staff recommends that the Planning Commission find this proposal to be consistent with the approved *Comprehensive Master Plan* and the adopted *Neighborhood Plan*, and send a positive recommendation to the Mayor and Council.

Public Notification

Notices of the Historic District Commission (HDC) evaluation and meeting were sent via first class mail to the property owners, the Lincoln Park Civic Association, adjacent property owners and other interested parties for both HDC meetings. The site history, photographs of the site and neighborhood, and the agenda for the evaluation meeting were also posted on the city's web page.

Attachments

- A. Site Map
- B. Zoning Map
- C. HDC Summary of Significance of 224 Elizabeth Avenue
- D. HDC Minutes from April 16 and May 21, 2009